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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, April 8, 1942.

Subject: "More About Dried Eggs". Information from marketing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

No one knows much about what the future holds in the way of food. But it is interesting to think about. One thing is certain. Our food habits as a nation and for most of us as individuals will change a lot, even in the way we use our protective foods. We hope these changes will give us a nation of stronger, healthier men, women, boys and girls.

For example, do you think you'll be buying dried eggs, as well as fresh eggs, when you go to your grocery stores, say, a couple of years from now? I don't mean buying them because you have to. I mean to buy them because you want to. Well, this may happen.

Won't it seem odd to dip your teaspoon into some sort of box and measure out just the amount of egg you need for an omelet, or scrambled eggs and bacon, or a sponge cake? Maybe you'll be making angel cakes and other dishes that use lots of eggs in the fall and winter when egg prices are now the highest.

What would you think of the idea of adding some dried egg to your breakfast orange juice-- instead of having a poached egg. Maybe not too much-- well, if you want your poached egg on toast, you'll probably stand pat on that point. But think of the many office and factory workers now who limit their breakfasts to what they can drink in a hurry. Too bad-- it shouldn't be-- but that's the way it is.

Or maybe we'll hit closer home if we consider the farm family-- the family that eats plenty of eggs when their chickens are laying lots of them and prices are low. The same family that eats few, if any, eggs when the chickens don't lay so well and the market value is much higher.

Or think of the families with low incomes who don't eat any eggs except when the price is very low. Think of those who-- out of necessity-- skip eggs entirely when the price is high. These folks know eggs are good for them. They like eggs. They know nutritionists say we ought to have at least 3 or 4 each week. But suppose they can't afford to buy the eggs.

It sounds reasonable that a large quantity of eggs could be dried-- that is, when there're lots of eggs on the market-- and when farmers don't get much for them. Then they could be sold later on when fresh eggs are higher for everyone-- and out of the reach of some. Maybe my imagination is running away with me-- but it seems as if lots of people could benefit from such a scheme. Whether this happens--or doesn't happen -- remains to be seen. But it's something for us to think about-- something for you mothers-- for everyone interested in good nutrition to think about.

The war is responsible for all the new interest in dried eggs. Do you know that the British are limited to just two fresh eggs a month? And that if it weren't for the dried eggs shipped to them through the Lend-Lease program, they'd be mighty short of this healthful food?

Do you know how much shipping space is saved because the eggs are in dried form? Do you know how impossible it would be to ship so many eggs if they had to be shipped fresh and therefore under refrigeration? I don't suppose so-- for this hasn't been a homemaker problem-- but it's been a big one for the lend-lease folks. Let me tell you about it. Dried eggs take up only about one-fourth space that eggs in the shell take. Before February first, more than 30 million pounds of dried egg were delivered for United Nations shipment-- the equivalent of well over a billion shell eggs. Three dozen shell eggs weigh only about a pound when dried. Just think how much shipping space is saved. Then, in addition, there's the refrigeration part of

the question. Dried eggs need no refrigeration. And so you can see what a help the drying has been to shipping.

Now, on a smaller scale, is there any reason why the dried eggs wouldn't help the same way in our transportation and our kitchens here at home-- that is, later on, when so much of the dried eggs aren't needed for shipment abroad? Lots of our families do not own a refrigerator. Again that's a pity-- but it's true. And lots of us who do have refrigerators would welcome more space.

Of course, I don't mean we'll ever come to the point where we don't want some fresh eggs. Try as you will, you can't make a "sunny-side up" from dried eggs. You can't poach eggs from powder. But you can make cakes, omelets, puddings-- and lots of other things from dried eggs. All the drying does is to take the water out of the egg. It leaves the rest of the egg with its abundance of food value.

I suppose lots of you have made cakes from dried eggs, but maybe you never thought of it that way. Dried egg is used in many of the commercial cake mixes-- you know those you just mix with water and sometimes flavoring, then bake. Or if you haven't used these, you've eaten commercially-made cakes, doughnuts, and candy. Many bakers and confectioners have been using dried eggs for years. There's been an egg drying industry in this country since 1800, but it's had its ups and downs. Since the war, however, it's gone ahead by leaps and bounds. And after the war it'll have to drop way back, or find new uses for the product.

At least one company is now experimenting with consumer packages. And the Department of Agriculture is working on grades for dried eggs. True, there are lots of points that will have to be worked out so that you can know just what you buy-- so that you can buy just the grade-- just the quality-- you want. And package labels will have to tell you just how and how much to use. But they will. Already many researchers in the Department of Agriculture and in the egg drying companies are working on just these points.

I wish I had more time-- there's so much to tell about dried eggs-- how the industry used to center in just a few States, primarily in the southwest-- how it has spread now to many states in the Cornbelt, to some on the West coast, and to New York and New Jersey. I'd like to tell you about the great egg-drying plants that used to be in China-- before the war changed all that, but I'll have to save the rest for another day.

(Written by Betty Leaning.)

